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THE CURRENT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THEORETICAL AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS.

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DESCRIPTORS- *LINGUISTICS, *LINGUISTIC THEORY, *APPLIED LINGUISTICS, TEACHING METHODS, TRANSFORMATION GENERATIVE GRAMMAR, ENGLISH, TEXTBOOK PREPARATION, LANGUAGE TEACHERS, PHONOLOGY, SYNTAX, *GENERATIVE GRAMMAR,

GENERATIVE THEORY NOW DOMINATES MACHINE TRANSLATION AND HAS BEGUN TO TAKE OVER THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN THE SCHOOLS, AS ONE PUBLISHER AFTER ANOTHER COMES OUT WITH A TRANSFORMATIONALLY-ORIENTED SERIES OF TEXTBOOK FOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH. THE AUTHOR FEELS, HOWEVER, THAT THE EFFECTS OF THIS THEORY ON LANGUAGE TEACHING HAVE BEEN NEGLIGIBLE AND THAT THE INNOVATIONS AND ADVANCES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING DURING THE PAST DECADE HAVE BEEN PEDAGOGICAL RATHER THAN LINGUISTIC. THE CONTENT OF THE TEACHING IS STILL THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS SHAPED BY THE LINGUISTIC THEORY OF THE 1930'S AND 40'S. THE FEW APPEALS TO LANGUAGE TEACHERS HAVE HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON THE PREPARATION OF TEACHING MATERIALS OR ON ACTUAL CLASSROOM PRACTICE. SEVERAL REASONS ARE SUGGESTED. (1) FEW OF THE GENERATIVE THEORETICIANS ARE ALSO LANGUAGE TEACHERS, AND ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THEORY. (2) UNTIL NOW, THE GENERATIVE GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH HAS BEEN RELATIVELY INACCESSIBLE TO LANGUAGE TEACHERS. (3) IT HASN'T BEEN TRIED BY LANGUAGE TEACHERS SIMPLY OUT OF INERTIA. THE AUTHOR SUGGESTS VARIOUS TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING SYNTAX AND PHONOLOGY GENERATIVELY AND ENDS WITH A PLEA FOR GRADUATE SEMINARS IN THE PREPARATION OF GENERATIVELY-BASED TEACHING MATERIALS. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "TESOL QUARTERLY," VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2, MARCH 1968, PUBLISHED BY TESOL, INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20007. (AMM)

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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

*The Current Discrepancy between Theoretical and Applied Linguistics**

David DeCamp

Until about a decade ago, theoretical and applied linguistics developed side by side, to their mutual benefit. Though relatively few language teachers were linguists, most linguists were also language teachers, and they set out with missionary zeal to prove that linguistics had a place in the language classroom. Applied linguistics has a long respectable history. It did not suddenly burst into existence on Pearl Harbor Day. Henry Sweet's *The Practical Study of Languages* appeared in 1899, Otto Jespersen's *How to Teach a Foreign Language* in 1904. Leonard Bloomfield's *An Introduction to the Study of Language* was published in 1914, nineteen years before his major theoretical book *Language*, and thirty-eight years before his *Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages*, a work that still appears on all reading lists for language teachers. During the 1940's and early 50's nearly every major linguist authored at least one language textbook. Bloch, Hockett, Haas, Fries, Twaddell—the bibliography for those years reads like a roster of the Linguistic Society.

But where are the language textbooks written by Chomsky, Halle, Postal, Klima, Fillmore, Ross, or even textbooks which seem to be very much influenced by them?

Until about a decade ago, the lag between theoretical discovery and classroom application was very short. Kenneth Pike's *The Intonation of American English* was published in 1946, but C. C. Fries was already using Pike's system in his *Intensive Course in English for Latin American Students* which was published in 1945. The Trager and Smith *Outline of English Structure*, with its famous nine vowels, three semi-vowels, four stresses, four pitches, and four junctures, appeared in 1951. The very following year, Martin Joos and William Welmers gave us the *Structural Notes and Corpus* for the ACLS TEFL series, incorporating the Trager-Smith system, and the next year, in 1953, we saw the first textbook in that series, F. B. Agard's *El Inglés Hablado*.

Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* appeared in 1957, and the Jakobson and Halle *Fundamentals of Language* in 1956. Now, more than a decade later, where are the language textbooks in which pronunciation is taught in terms of Jakobsonian distinctive features?

Until about a decade ago, relatively few language teachers had studied any linguistic theory, but those few took what little they knew and put it into immediate practice. Many of us were English teachers before we were linguists. Some of us blundered into TESL without realizing that there was such a thing. I, for example, was

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*This paper was presented at the TESOL Convention, March 1968.

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teaching remedial "bonehead" English at the University of New Mexico in 1948 when I accidentally discovered that the problems were somehow a little different in one class which was composed almost entirely of Spanish speakers. But we read the linguists—as soon as we found out about them—and we applied them. As soon as we heard about the phoneme, we started using minimal pair drills. When we discovered the idea of immediate constituents, we added substitution and pyramid drills. What little linguistics we knew, we used.

Now, after a decade of NDEA institutes, The Center for Applied Linguistics, in-service retraining programs, and required linguistics in the curriculum of teacher training, very few teachers are as ignorant of linguistic theory as we were then. As the study of linguistics became popular and profitable, the films and popularized textbooks on linguistics for school teachers have multiplied like oversexed hamsters. We even made *Time Magazine*! You have to look real hard today to find a language teacher who has never heard of Noam Chomsky. The generative-transformational theory has been fairly represented in these recent attempts to linguistically brain-rinse the language teachers. Granted that many such courses have been short-term affairs, miserably taught. Most teachers have been generatively baptized by sprinkling rather than total immersion. Most of them have received their transformations third hand and filtered through Paul Roberts or Owen Thomas. Yet they can at least manage cocktail-party chatter about deep structures and transformations, and that is more than most language teachers knew about phonemes and morphemes in the 1940's.

Now, after a decade of missionary efforts to bring the alpha-beta-gammas of transformational theory to the heathen language teachers, the question is: What are they doing with it? Are they using it? Where are the transformationally-based language classes?

So here stands linguistics in 1968, plagued not only with a credibility gap—for far too many people now expect every linguist to be a guru with the keys to the universe—but plagued with an unprecedented applicability gap. The dominant theoretical approach today is unquestionably generative-transformational. A few linguists are still working with the same empirical structural approach which dominated the 1940's. A few are working with new and still relatively untested theories: dependency grammar, stratificational grammar, resonance theory, etc. But the papers presented at meetings of the Linguistic Society and in the leading journals are overwhelmingly transformational. In fact the major controversy today is not between generative and taxnomic-structural theories, as stated by *Time* (February 16, 1968), but between factions within the generative school: a conservative wing led by Chomsky and a rebel group led by Postal, Ross, and Lakoff. Generative theory now dominates machine translation and has begun to take over the teaching of English grammar in the schools, as one publisher after another comes out with a transformationally-oriented series of textbooks for high school English. Yet the effects of this the-

ory on language teaching have been negligible.

The innovations and advances in language teaching during the past decade—and there have been many of them—have been pedagogical rather than linguistic. We have seen Earl Stevick's elaborate electronic metaphors: UHF, microwaves, and modular courses. We have seen programmed courses, teaching machines, improved language labs, computer-assisted instruction. Most important, we have seen massive projects, supported with state and federal funds, bringing to hundreds of learners the modern methods previously available only to a favored few in select institutes. But the content of these vastly improved and expanded programs is still the English language as shaped by the linguistic theory of the 1930's and 1940's.

Indeed there have been a few contrastive analyses based on generative theory, e.g. the Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin *The Grammatical Structures of English and Spanish* (1965), several articles explaining generative grammar to language teachers and exhorting them to apply it, e.g., William C. Ritchie's articles in the last two issues of *Language Learning* (July and December, 1967). But there is no evidence that these appeals have had much effect, either on the preparation of teaching materials or on actual classroom practice. In 1963 we developed for use in our program for retraining English teachers in Taiwan a small set of transformational syntactic drills, which were later edited and published by Earl Rand. A few such drills also appeared in the later volumes of the *English for Today* (1964–67) series, and a few other publishers have followed suit. But this is scarcely a beginning in the application even of generative syntax, and generative phonology and semantics have yet to get even a foot in the door to the language classroom. Why?

There are several reasons. First is the attitude of the generative theoreticians themselves, most of whom have very little interest in promoting the classroom use of their thories. Few of them are also language teachers. They are preoccupied with the further development of theory and have little time to devote to application. They fear premature and improper application. A few of them even deny the relevance of generative theory to language teaching. Jerry Fodor is quoted by the article in *Time* as saying that it would be as foolish to teach a man linguistic theory as it would be to teach him the theory of the internal combustion engine so that he could learn to drive a car. One might point out that although a driver doesn't have to be an automotive engineer, he does have to know a certain amount about the mechanical operation of his car in order to be a good driver. And of course the best refutation of Fodor's quip is the fact that if a theory says that a language is one thing but a teacher is teaching it as something else, then either the theory or the teacher is probably wrong, and it's jolly well time we found out which. Nevertheless, the generative theorists have hardly been the most enthusiastic salesmen for generative grammar in the language class.

A second reason is that until now, the generative grammar of English has been relatively inaccessible to language teachers. It has appeared in bits and

pieces in scholarly papers (many of them unpublished and only privately distributed) or in superficial introductions like those of Paul Roberts and Owen Thomas. Furthermore these papers bristle with unfamilar symbols, strange diagrams, and mathematical jargon. Conversations with generative theorists tend to be filled with such terms as "recursive function," "finite state," "Boolean condition," and "Turing machine." But be of good cheer; help is on the way. A solid but readable grammar of English by Rosenbaum and Jacobs is now in the page-proof stage, and another by Paul Postal is in preparation. Even the long-awaited *The Sound Pattern of English* by Chomsky and Halle will soon be available. The mathematical basis of generative theory is by no means pre-requisite to using a generative grammar—Fodor's analogy does indeed apply here. And the unfamiliar symbols are usually only a formulaic shorthand for comfortably familiar statements. A rule of the form S→ NP VP loses all its terror when translated into the statement: "Underlying every sentence is a basic construction consisting of a subject and a predicate." Certainly no one suggests that the student learning English be required to read and write formulas, but the pattern drills by which he is taught the language should indeed be based on the truths which these formulas represent.

The main reason why generative theory has not been more extensively applied is simply inertia. It just hasn't been tried. Language teachers, like linguistic theorists, have been busy and preoccupied with other things. Many have laboriously mastered one linguistic theory and resent having to learn a new theory. Anyway, they complain, generative theory keeps changing. Teachers worked their way through Paul Roberts or Robert Lees, with their kernel sentences and combinatory transformations, only to find that *Syntactic Structures* is now out of date, and that they must learn the new *Aspects* model with its deep and surface structures. If the Postal-Ross-Lakoff heresy is successful, they may have to learn yet a third generative theory. I indeed understand, though I cannot agree with, their reluctance to revise their textbook until the theoretical dust settles a bit. They feel betrayed by those specialists who will offer tantalizing but inadequate, vaguely programmatic suggestions for applying generative theory but then, once the article is published, never follow through but only retreat into academically greener fields of pure theory. Generative grammar is a general and unified theory of language and so does not lend itself very easily to eclectic application. The introduction of a few transformation drills into a course which is primarily based on the old concepts of phonemes, morphemes, and immediate constituents often results in inconsistencies and frustrating confusion. Furthermore, a generative grammar begins with the abstract and works towards the concrete. The core of every generative grammar is the deep structure, a set of abstract syntactic relationships. The surface structure, the empirically observable facts of the language—the sentences as they are actually spoken and heard, the things which the language teacher must use every day in the class from the very beginning—are presented in

the theory as being only a superficial consequence of the underlying abstractions. We can understand the despair of the teacher who simply cannot see how she can get such a theoretical structure inside the heads of her students with the tools available to her: her own voice, the blackboard, and the tape recorder.

What then can we teach transformationally? The syntax is probably the easiest. Long before Bloomfield and Trager and Smith, language teachers were using transformation drills for the passive, making the students convert "John killed the mongoose" into "The mongoose was killed by John." Within the past decade, several new textbooks have provided similar drills based on a few other simple transformations: changing positive sentences into negatives, statements into questions, and adding tag questions to simple statements. Such techniques should be continued and extended to many other important transformations. For example, the cleft-sentence transformation, which can change "The mongoose ate the rooster" into either "It was the mongoose that ate the rooster" or "It was the rooster that the mongoose ate." There is the pseudo-cleft transformation, resulting in either "What ate the rooster was the mongoose," "What the mongoose ate was the rooster," or "What the mongoose did was eat the rooster." The *there*-transformation, which equates "A mongoose is in the henhouse" with "There is a mongoose in the henhouse." The indirect object placement transformation, which takes "John gave the diplodocus to Sarah" and changes it to "John gave Sarah the diplodocus." There are many others of this type, all better taught as transformational processes than as separate and unrelated sentence patterns.

Perhaps most important are the many complementizing and other embedding transformations. Given a pair of sentences like "Susan had bad breath" and "Someone noticed it," the student must learn how to combine them to get "Someone noticed that Susan had bad breath." Then he can passivize this sentence to "That Susan had bad breath was noticed," and then finally, by a transformation called "extraposition," he can wind up with "It was noticed that Susan had bad breath." In a transformationally-based course, infinitives, gerunds, and participles would never be taught as words or phrases but as processes operating on whole sentences. Given the sentence "We sat under an umbrella" and "We ate the yoghurt," the student must learn to produce "we sat under an umbrella to eat the yoghurt" and "We sat under an umbrella eating the yoghurt." Incidentally, this approach to infinitives and participles was recommended by Otto Jespersen, long before Chomsky.

Within the deep structure, the generative analysis of the English verbal auxiliary into three successive parts (tense, modal, and aspect) makes it possible to teach English verb forms by means of a simple substitution drill instead of working through long and complicated paradigms.

One of the most interesting of recent contributions to generative theory has been an unpublished paper by Sandra Annear, in which she transformationally links embedded relative clauses with conjoined coordinate clauses. A restrictive clause, she sug-

gests, is related to a preceding coordinate clause; a non-restrictive clause is related to a following coordinate clause. If we accept her theory, it would suggest a type of classroom drill in which the student would take a sentence like "Those women are wearing mink coats and they are English teachers" and change it either to "Those women who are wearing mink coats are English teachers" or to "Those women, who are English teachers, are wearing mink coats."

These are only a few of the things that we could be doing, but generally are not doing, wth generative syntax. What about pronunciation? Here the language teacher is most likely to be repelled by the fact that most of the phonetic features in a generative phonology are stated in acoustic rather than physiological terms. Terms like *grave*, *acute*, *compact*, and *strident* indeed seem far removed from the language classroom. Each term, however, has a physiological correlate. It doesn't help the language learner to tell him that the vowels /u, o, ɔ/ contain a distinctive feature of *flatness*, meaning that certain acoustic frequencies are musically flattend or lowered. For English, however, the teacher will be just as accurate in describing this feature as *lip-rounding*, for in English it is lip-rounding that produces the flatted tones. And lip-rounding is indeed a relevant classroom term.

The real difference between the old structural and the new generative phonology is whether the sounds are presented as unit entities, e.g., the vowel /a/ or the consonant /t/, or as combinations of pronunciation features, e.g., lip-rounding, voicing or nasality. In the old method, sounds are treated as things, as little building blocks that can be moved about to different places in the word or that can be substituted for one another. In generative phonology the stream of speech is treated as if it were music played in harmony on an organ. Each segment of this music is a complex chord produced by depressing several keys on the organ simultaneously. As the music moves on to the next segment, one or more of the notes making up the chord is changed. When we speak the word *English*, we pass through six such segments, each time changing one or more features, but the feature of voicing we hold and do not change until the very last segment, like a sustained pedal note on an organ which is not released until the very last note.

In the language classroom this means we would not be teaching the vowel /æ/ as a unit entity. Rather we would teach the student to articulate "frontness" of vowel (/i, e, æ/ as opposed to /a, o, ɔ/) and "lowness" of vowels (/æ, a, ɔ/) as opposed to /e, ʌ, o/). When these three features coincide—vowel, front, and low—the result is the vowel /æ/. This is not a new idea. Both Sapir and Bloomfield noted that it is easier to teach a student a whole related series of new and strange sounds than it is to teach him one single new sound from the series. For the Mandarin Chinese speaker studying English, it is easier to learn how to voice all of his consonants than it is to learn to pronounce the English /d/ sound as a separate task unrelated to other sounds like /b/ and /g/.

It is in teaching assimilations, stress shifts, and other phonological processes that generative phonology can be most helpful. The weak "schwa" vowel

[ə] is not considered an independent vowel at all, but only a weakened or slurred variety of several other vowels. Thus in the word *telegraph* the second vowel is weakened from [ɛ] to [ə] because it is in a weak syllable. In the word *telegraphy*, it is the first vowel that is weakened from [ɛ] to [ə]. This is really a very old-fashioned approach successfully used both by linguists and by language teachers long before Bloomfield.

Old-fashioned teachers of German still teach their students to devoice consonants at the end of a word. Thus the word spelled *Weib* is pronounced [vaip], not [vaib]. More recently, influenced by structural linguistics, many teachers have approached this problem as one of substituting unit phonemes, i.e., substitute a /p/ for a /b/, a /t/ for a /d/, and so on for a long list of such substitutions. It strikes me that the old method with its simple generalization, "devoice the final consonant," is a lot more effective, and it follows the new generative phonology exactly. Similarly the student of English can be taught the processes of assimilation, often by a simple substitution drill. You can give him the word (or a sentence containing the word) *intolerable* and then a series of substitution cues like *proper, compatible, legible,* and *reverent.* As he practices making the new combinations *improper, incompatible, illegible,* and *irreverent,* he develops a feel for making the basic negative prefix *in-* assimilate to the following sound. This is far better than teaching him all these words as separate unrelated vocabulary words or making him puzzle through a whole series of substitutions of one unit sound for another.

If you teach pronunciation as it is described in a generative grammar, you can also stop apologizing for the English spelling system. Too many teachers precipitate spelling problems by berating our poor old writing system, calling it irregular and difficult, inferior to that of Spanish or some other language. Actually the system of English spelling is not bad, when you understand how it really works. If the French scribes and other well-meaning but misguided scholars hadn't tinkered with it so much in attempts to reform it, it would be an excellent system. Generative linguistics has shown us that English spelling (or for that matter, Spanish or German spelling) is *not* comparable to a phonetic transcription, i.e., it never intended to represent each sound in the word, as we hear it, with a distinct alphabetic symbol. Rather it represents, and quite accurately too, the pronunciation of the underlying form of each morpheme, a pronunciation which is then modified by several processes like assimilation and weakening. Thus the words *telegraph* and *telegraphy* are both spelled with an *e* in the first two syllables, indicating that these syllables are pronounced [ɛ] when they are accented. When the syllable is weakened by loss of stress, the vowel is weakened, but it is not necessary to represent this weakening in the spelling, because every native speaker automatically and unconsciously performs this process of weakening. Your students may not know whether to spell the words *professor* and *manager* with an *er* or an *or,* but if you then teach them the words *professorial* and *managerial,* in which the problem syllable is accented and there-

fore has its full *e* or *o* value, the difficulty disappears.

Generative semantics, like generative phonology, factors the meaning into a set of semantic features. Thus the words *pen* and *pencil* have all the same semantic features in common except one. Both are small inanimate objects used for writing or drawing, but one uses ink, the other lead. Because this analysis into semantic features pinpoints both the similarities and the differences in meaning between near synonyms, it makes the teaching of vocabulary much easier than if the meaning of each word is approached as a separate unique problem. It should even be possible, though no one has yet done so, to construct semantic minimal pair drills, analogous to phonological minimal pair drills.

I have suggested a few of the many aspects of generative theory which can and should be applied to classroom teaching. But such suggestions have very limited value if no one follows them up and turns them into actual classroom materials available to the teacher. How can we get this job done? We've been saying this sort of thing ever since 1962, when Leonard Newmark assembled a gaggle of linguists (or is it a pride of linguists?) at the NAFSA meeting in Columbus to talk about getting generative grammar into the classroom. Like the many previous speakers on this subject, I could always close in the best peprally manner by exhorting all of you to get out there and write! It happens, however, that I have one more specific suggestion. Like several others of you here today, I teach a graduate seminar in applied linguistics. This year I got tired of following the same old general methods approach and set as the seminar topic this semester the preparation of transformationally-based teaching materials. Nineteen students enrolled, plus three auditors who agreed to share in the work. Four students dropped out when they discovered that I expected an understanding of Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) as a minimal prerequisite for the course. That left us with eighteen. Each student chose the language with which he wished to work. Seven selected English; the other languages chosen include Spanish, Korean, Georgian, Arabic, French, Persian, Japanese, Javanese, and Bahasa Indonesian. Each student was assigned one component of the generative theory. His task for the semester: to prepare a set of transformationally-based materials for teaching the assigned aspect of his language. Assignments include the consonants of English, the word stress of Persian, the determiners of French, the pronouns of Spanish, the semantics of Chinese, etc. It is too early to say how many of these projects will be successful, but, as I have told the students, they will be making a real contribution even if they thoroughly explore one avenue only to discover that it is a blind alley. At least someone will have tried it. I will encourage each student to publish his results, and some already have plans to expand their projects later into full-length textbooks. And I promise that I will publish a general summary report of the successes and failures of the experiment.

Now I repeat: Some of you also teach courses in materials preparation. Why not try the same experiment? If on ten university campuses we could

have annual seminars in which students are actively working on such problems, we could systematically cover every aspect of the language and determine, once and for all, which features of generative theory are really applicable to language teaching. We would finally be getting generative grammar into the classroom, instead of just talking about it.